

**If the poor are
on the moon...**



**The Work
of Mother Teresa.**

A Play by Richard Lung.



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First edition.

[2020 note on Nikki, the dedicatee.]

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If the poor are on the moon...

Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me.

Based mainly on writings by Ved Mehta, Desmond Doig, Navin Chawla, Eileen Eegan, José González-Balado, Brother Angelo Devananda and Mother Teresa. This play, by Richard Lung, has tried to convey the spirit of Mother Teresa beliefs in action without judging them.

All author royalties for performances to go to the Mission of Charity founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Dedication: To Nikki, who met Mother Teresa, awarding her play and the players.

PLAY with a prolog and a prelude and four acts.

General directions:

For accompanying music -- not an impediment to the dialog -- Rimsky-Korsakov's Sheherazade may be used for the prelude. And the four movements of Beethoven's Eroica used, respectively, for the four acts. I have not prescribed sound-effects. For the sake of realism, back-ground noises, to modern drama, intrude so much that audiences may not hear the dialog.

In old-style theatre, actors were trained to throw their voices to the gods with complete clarity. Psychology justifies a drama that cuts out back-ground noises, because human attention does this anyway. A play, that keeps down its sound effects, helps an audiences selective attention by reducing fatiguing distractions.

This approach suits the story of a contemplative mission that is in the world but not of the world. This play could be produced with many more walk-on parts. That would not suit most drama groups. So, multiple parts are indicated for some players. Some actors have to imaginatively become more than one person in the same scene or in a single exchange.

A few times, I preferred to let a character double, as another character, with reported speech. (The Royal Shakespeare Company flourished many a 'He said' or 'She said' in its celebrated dramatisation of "Nicholas Nickleby.") The cast is reduced mainly to an elemental family of mother, father, sister, brother, etc...

Actors, playing many roles, remind us of the mission vision to see a humanised god in every human being. Dialog with Mother Teresa

often is suspended by asides from the other speaker to the audience, as if a third actor.

CHARACTERS in order of appearance for the whole play:

Prolog: Mother Teresa.

Prelude: Journalist. Vizier.

Act one: Nun. Father. Priest.

Act two: Sister. Man. Three children.

Act four: Brother.

(Note: Parts may be further combined across acts. For example, one speaker could take the parts of Vizier, Priest, and Man, respectively in the prelude, acts one and two.)

PROLOG.

MOTHER TERESA:

Child of the streets wandering.

Child of the streets wandering,
put your hand in my own for a home.
But the child, at the party, scarcely smiled.
In a little while, she was gone with her smile.
For days, I sought her in the city.
She appeared again, I took her with me:
"Sister, please, follow this child wherever she goes."

Sister sent word to me, 'Mother Teresa,
into the thoro-fares of Calcutta,
she goes, to see a woman, under a tree,
who has brought two stones for company.'
"Child, child of the streets wandering,
how is it you would not stay with
all the beautiful things you had to play with?"

The little one smiled and replied,
'I could not live without my mother.
She loves me, like no other.'
The womans smile was that of her child,
as she spoke, 'Hearth and home to me
are these two stones under a tree.
Children, who are loved, never run away from home.'

PRELUDE to the four acts.

CHARACTERS in order of appearance:

Journalist.

Vizier.

Enter JOURNALIST:

The Nizam, His Exalted Highness of Hyderabad,
was jewel in the crown of the Mogul Empire.

The Nizam took over the palace of Kamal Khan.

On all the panels and walls, he left KK,
the thrifty Nizam renamed King "Kothi" (Hindu for "house").

He was surrounded by guards and his private police force.

Driven out from his confines of marble,

His Highness yelled: Are we arrived?

He didnt know whether rare journeys to planes,
between his five palaces, took two minutes or twenty.

I left the guest house to interview the grand vizier.

Out of corners and out of door-ways,

old Muslim bearers salaamed in sonorous Urdu.

Cautious and sly, smiles vizier Taraporewala

in white achkan of shark skin over drill trousers.

Enter VIZIER:

As an autocrat, no-one could contradict,

the Nizam never learned he could ever be wrong.

The "Nizam" is Arabic for "order" and his son,

the Prince was ordered: Sack your harem.

On birth-days, the king, in court, received presents of girls,
like Sheherazade, wiling away the Arabian nights.

The nazrana was a cash tax on his subjects,

according to status, to gaze on their god.
He never paid people himself, so knew nothing's worth:
five rupees or five thousand.
The dynasty kept no accounts, only strong rooms and trunks.
His father threw the Jacob's diamond in a drawer.
A servant, while dusting, found it rolled in a handkerchief.
A sold train-load of jewelry and plate escaped
confiscation on Indian independence.
For a gold present of forty thousand rare coins,
each worth over a hundred times its face value,
the prime minister mustered: "Very good."
The Nizam, of the nazrana, had gold plate for hundreds
but ate just cream and sweets, off tin, on a mat in his room.
Always on opium, he weighed under ninety pounds.

ACT ONE

Prayer without action is no prayer at all.

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CHARACTERS:

Journalist.

Nun.

Father.

Mother Teresa.

Priest.

Enter JOURNALIST:

This journalist trailed from Indias richest man
to the servant of the poorest of the poor.

A Catholic official and fellow news-paper-man tipped:

"Watch this woman. She's quite extra-ordinary.

She's going to be a saint."

Twenty-seven years later, I sought her beginnings,
as a teacher, at the Loreto convent in Entally.

Enter NUN:

Please don't give my name,

just mention me as one of her contemporaries.

There are no legends. Mother Teresa was ordinary.

She was close to her fellow Yugoslav nun,

Mother Gabriel, who died in 1974.

Teresa's heart was set on the work. She said:
"I couldn't meet God if I didn't do this."

JOURNALIST:

Ask Mother Teresa about herself and she'd interrupt:
"That's not necessary. I am not important.
Write about the work and my people."

Down the road, from the Mother House
of the Mission of Charity, is a church.
It happens to be dedicated to St Teresa.
From Dampremy, in coal-mining Belgium,
a saintly old man Father Henry told his secrets.

Enter FATHER HENRY:

I was screwed down here, in charge of the Bengali community.
Our church was in Entally where Mother was Head-mistress.
From 1941 to '47, Teresa and I worked together.
We have this secret. Prayer without action is no prayer at all.
We want to work for the poorest of the poor.
We comfort people in hospitals or in bustis, the slums.
We discussed what we learned.
Mother's search is an experiment to experience God.
She got girls from the Sodality of Our Lady to do penance
and serve the country and serve the neighbor.
Hindu and Muslim women wanted to join
and help the Sodality and social classes.
Independence was in the air. Mahatma Gandhi said,
"Make no laws unless you consider the poorest person you know."
It was an inspiration.
The Archbishop of Calcutta, Monseigneur Perier told me:
(FATHER as) ARCHBISHOP:
Imagine that a European nun teaching Indian girls starts an Order

to work amongst the poorest of the poor.

FATHER:

Your Grace, that plan humanly speaking is impossible,
but it is needed.

(FATHER as) ARCHBISHOP:

If it is needed then God will bless it.

FATHER:

Ferdinand Perier, he died at ninety, invited the Yugoslav Jesuits.

Their stories home inspired Teresa to serve in Bengal.

I left Calcutta for a retreat and was told

I wouldn't find her any more when I got back.

You see, she still had her secret.

Then one day a lady in a sari with a blue border comes in.

Enter MOTHER TERESA:

Do you recognise me?

FATHER:

I seem to have seen you before.

MOTHER:

Where is Moti Jhil?

FATHER:

You should know it well;

it is the slum on the other side of your convent wall.

(*Aside:*)

Now Mother de Senacle, from Mauritia, was Principal of Entally
and a great protector of Teresa.

She took twenty girls from Moti Jhil to educate.

They were made at home on the verandah
with a good Sister looking after them.

After a year only two were left.

That is why Teresa had to leave the convent.

Two years, she waited for permission
to serve the poor outside convent walls.
Her spiritual confessor, Father Van Exem
had her sign the decree in triplicate.

MOTHER:

Can I go to the slums now?

(FATHER HENRY as) EXEM:

It's not so simple.

You now obey the archbishop of Calcutta.

FATHER:

In 1948, she was off the train, at Patna,
the ancient imperial city on the Ganges,
for the Medical Mission founded by Mother Denger.

(NUN as) MEDIC MOTHER DENGEL:

The convent was once a church with disused cemetery for a garden.
We slept between tomb-stones under the privacy of mosquito nets.

MOTHER:

I have no idea where my ideals will take me.

I shall go and live with the Little Sisters of the Poor in Calcutta.

From there on, God will direct me.

My Order will diet like the poorest of the poor.

On Mondays, rice and salt, on Tuesdays, salt and rice,
on Wednesdays, rice and salt, and so on.

(NUN as) MEDIC:

It's criminal. You will all die.

(*Aside*):

Father Van Exem visited us. Giving a talk, he asked after Teresa.

MOTHER:

I am here.

(NUN as) MEDIC:

He failed to recognise her among Indian and Anglo-Indian nurses.
Nurses, who were her Loreto students, shed tears to see Sister
Teresa

in the sari of the poor, till they knew why.

She learned everything. She mid-wifed

or cut off a gangrenous thumb, and was splattered in blood.

MOTHER:

Our Loreto nuns should see this!

(NUN as) MEDIC:

A 15 year old girl dying of TB wanted to join her mission.

Teresa confirmed her as an associate,

before leaving with a present of sturdy sandals.

They lasted long and were shared by women joining her.

The "Patna sandals" signaled their new life of carefree poverty.

(Calling back to Teresa):

You will need all the help you can get, on the streets of Calcutta.

Someday you ought to visit the governor.

MOTHER:

No, I could not do that. I couldnt approach a dignitary like that.

(NUN as) MEDIC (*smiling*):

Not long after, I learned of a slum childrens outing,

in the governors mansion gardens, helped by Teresa.

FATHER (HENRY):

When Teresa returned, our first meal was provided by God.

Mother didn't want to eat, but I said: "You must." That is like her.

And their program, it was impossible. At 5.30 they were in church.
By 7.30 they were on the streets with their bags
working in a sweepers colony, visiting the sick, teaching.

MOTHER:

God wants me to be a holy nun laden with the poverty of the cross.
Today I learned a good lesson.
When I was going and going till my legs and arms were paining,
I thought how the poor have to suffer to get food and shelter.
But of free choice, my God, and love for you,
I desire to do your holy will.
Give me courage now, this moment.

FATHER:

Mother rented a small room in Moti Jhil, for five rupees a month.
Gathering ragged children, her mission began with a prayer,
scratching the Bengali alfabet in the ground with a stick
and telling nursery rhymes.
Locals brought chairs, a table and black-board.

MOTHER:

They are such good children. They want to learn.
Already more than forty come every day.
Now we've got a few benches, we could manage nicely until
monsoon time.

Enter PRIEST:

Teresa is responding to the wiles of the devil.
I cannot understand why she left her fine work as a teacher
for some uncertain effort in the slums.

FATHER:

Mother, the archbishop demands an apology
from the old priest who said that.

MOTHER:

I knocked at a convent to take my meal.

(NUN as) CONVENT NUN:

You can go round to the back.

MOTHER:

I was left to eat under the stairs like a beggar
before going back on the streets.

FATHER:

Mother took people, dying on the streets, to hospital after hospital.
When taxis and rickshaws failed, she borrowed a work-mans wheel-
barrow.

Too often, to her distress, she failed to gain them admittance
and they died on the streets, where she found them.

MOTHER:

Cats and dogs are treated better than this.

FATHER:

From the Yugoslav Jesuits, who inspired her to come to Bengal,
one of her strongest supporters said: We thought she was cracked.
I see another priest, the procurator of a leper mission.
He told me: "She's a mad-woman."

(Addressing Another priest):

How is the mad-woman doing?

(PRIEST as) ANOTHER PRIEST:

Make no mistake, the finger of God is there.

FATHER:

This I already knew. She is a person of Christ,
an experience of Christ in the poor.

More girls joined Mother, mostly pupils from Entally.
The first was Subhasini Das, who became Sister Agnes,
taking Mothers Christian name.
Next was Magdalene Gomes, now Sister Gertrude.

(NUN as) SUBHASINI DAS:

I have known Mother since I went to school at nine years old.
We were all disturbed at the news from Father Henry.

FATHER:

Special permission has come from Rome for Mother to leave.
God has called her to work for the poor.

(NUN as) DAS:

Why, when there are so many Loreto nuns, is our Mother called?
Can't someone else go?

FATHER:

Nobody can be pushed into work like this. It is the call of God
Himself.
If one is not called by God, one cannot go.

Mother was given, without rent, the upstairs room of a Bengali
Christian,
whose family was evangelised by the Portuguese.
He said: "Mother Teresa was sent to us from God.
To receive her was a blessing. We received. We did not give."
Teresa's Sisters were sleeping like canned sardines
and praying to get a permanent house.
Archbishop Perier sent a visiting American, Cardinal Spellman.

(PRIEST as) CARDINAL:

Where do you live?

MOTHER:

Here, in this room, Your Eminence.

This is our refectory. We move the tables and the benches aside.

(PRIEST as) CARDINAL:

Where is the rest of the convent, where do you study?

MOTHER:

We study here, too, Your Eminence...

And this is also our dormitory.

(PRIEST as) CARDINAL:

Have you a chapel?

MOTHER:

It is also our chapel, Your Eminence, with the altar behind the partition.

(PRIEST as) CARDINAL (*beginning to smile*):

I will say mass for you.

FATHER:

At last, Teresa was offered a small dilapidated house in the Moti Jhil slum.

MOTHER:

I'll take it.

FATHER:

Mother you are going to make a big blunder.

If you live among all those poor demanding people,
always demanding, you will disappear.

That offer has fallen thru, thank God!

You've been offered another old house.

But the owner jumped to show its sturdiness and disappeared,

thru the floor in splinters and dust clouds, to his death.
I am meeting a magistrate, Mr Islam, emigrating to Pakistan.

(JOURNALIST as) ISLAM (*greeting Henry*):
I love you -- you need not look surprised.
I know the Jesuits well and have studied in St Xaviers.

FATHER:
How much do you want for your house?

(JOURNALIST as) ISLAM:
Name your own price.

FATHER:
A lakh?

(JOURNALIST as) ISLAM:
That's less than the value of the land the house is built on --
I agree. I have prayed on this at the mosque (*tearfully*) and decided:
I got that house from God. I give it back to Him.

MOTHER:
Father, it is too big; what to do with all that?

FATHER:
Mother, you will need it all. There will come a day when you ask
where to put all your people.
(*Aside*):
The people of Moti Jhil gathered money
to start a small home for dying destitutes.
They provided two beds. And one dies and one survives.
That was the rule. That is still the rule.
Others objected to the smell of dying.
So, they had to close the place.

MOTHER:

I beg you the good people of Calcutta Corporation for a place where people can die with dignity and love.

It is a shame for people to die on our city roads.

FATHER:

The Corporation offered either a house near the Mother House or a pilgrims rest house, by the great temple of Kalighat.

The rest house was occupied by *goondas* -- thugs and loafers -- for gambling and drinking.

MOTHER:

I choose the rest-house, because the destitutes go to Kalighat to die. All devout Hindus in the city wish to be cremated in this sacred spot.

FATHER:

Permission came in 1952 on the anniversary of Indias Independence.

MOTHER:

I wish to open in a week, for the Feast Day of the Immaculate Heart.

FATHER:

This says nothing of the cleaning to be done for *Nirmal Hriday* or the Place of the Pure Heart.

The first entrant was a woman I found lying outside a hospital -- the place that denied the dying woman, Mother first picked up.

An early guest, called Charubala had the bad karma of a child-widow.

She worked for relatives, as long as she could bear it, and then did domestic work, till paralysed and useless.

She made-up songs for fellow patients.

As expected, there was Hindu opposition to Mothers work.
One demonstrater threatened to kill the Sisters.

MOTHER:

If you kill us, we would only hope to reach God sooner.

(JOURNALIST as) COMMISSIONER:

Of what awful thing is he guilty to deserve such suffering?

MOTHER:

That is a crucifix. All our order wear one on the shoulders of our saris.

(JOURNALIST as) COMMISSIONER:

Local people ask the police to remove you,
for trying to convert Hindus to Christianity.

I promised to carry out their request.

Having looked at your work, I shall keep my word, on one condition:
that the mothers and sisters, of all protesters, come,
day in and day out, to do the same work...

Nearby is a black stone image of the goddess Kali.

Here is the living Kali.

FATHER:

The Police Commissioner did his utmost to protect Mother.

The threats and the stones kept being hurled.

Mother picked up a cholera case, no one would touch.

A priest was dying, in his own mess, outside Kali temple.

At the rest home, he died a happy death.

Some say the dying priest speaks of Kali:

(PRIEST as) DYING PRIEST:

I served the goddess Kali in an idol.

That nun is the goddess Kali in person.

Exit priest.

FATHER: However, there was no more trouble.

A mysterious lady appeared on school prize day in Moti Jhil.

She went from hut to hut in the slums, finding out about Mother.

The stories made her a staunch helper till she died.

She served without fuss and shunned recognition.

When Mother Teresa went on retreat, this lady took charge of the Home for dying destitutes.

Dr B C Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, was a giant of a man and powerful.

Among capitalist and imperialist ladies, his niece

was touched by Mothers soul. You find this time and again.

It is a certain world, a realistic contact with God.

For the love of God, Mother had visiting senators scrub the floor.

Opposition still awaited Teresa, like the man who told her:

"I would not help or touch a leper for a thousand pounds."

MOTHER:

Neither would I but I would willingly tend him for the love of God.

FATHER:

Looking to start a new leper centre, a co-worker noticed:

"Villagers are picking up stones. Run for the car."

MOTHER:

Oh, dear. I dont think God wants us to have a leper clinic here.

We shall pray and see what he does want.

FATHER:

Looking for another site, Mother was met with the response:

"This city district refuses a new Home for the Dying here, even if they are not lepers. It would take away the peace of the neighborhood and reduce our property values."

MOTHER:

I'm sorry for you people. Later on, you will regret it.
You have not rejected me, but you have rejected Gods poor.

FATHER:

Then, there's the lepers self-governing village
at Titagarh, in the industrial suburbs.

MOTHER:

At every center, we made the thousands of lepers choose their own
leader
and their own council, so that we can deal with them all.

(JOURNALIST as) GENT was:

MR BIG

Was Mr Big ever a big man at all
working in a big government building
fanned by all the air-conditioning,
and soothed by answers to my every call?

The staff and the callers were all bows
when out I came from my big office
into a big car at my service
to be chauffeured to the big house

for my big family. Then they found me out
a leper! No more fans, no home, no family.
Only these young sisters wanted me
who you see here. They are my people now.

MOTHER:

A child is the only joy in life of the poor.

If you remove a child from their home, or from those with leprosy, who is going to smile at them and help them to get better?

A mother and father put their three-day old boy between them.

Each one looked at him. They extended their hands towards him, then they would pull back.

They made gestures, wanting to kiss their child, and again they would pull back.

I picked up the baby, and the father and mother followed him with their eyes as I walked away. I held up the child towards them, and they kept on looking at him with great tenderness until I was out of sight.

Because they loved him more than they loved themselves, they had the strength to give him up.

It is beautiful to see the sacrifice, our leper parents make, for their children, so that they will not be infected and may grow up as normal, happy children.

A wonderful woman scarcely had feet to walk on and she walked more than six miles, with her baby in her arms.

She said:

Sister, see, my child also has leprosy. I have seen a spot.

The Sister examined the child and took the smear

but it was not leprosy. The woman felt so happy, she took the child and walked all the way back -- she didn't even stop to rest.

If they come as soon as they see a spot or something, then in a year or two they can be cured.

Last Christmas we had a party for all our lepers.

Every one was given a parcel of food and clothes and things like that.

FATHER (*Aside*):

The Sisters possessions are three saris,
made by lepers, they've rehabilitated.
Teresas garment is neatly darned.

MOTHER:

With government help, we aim to build rehabilitation centres,
all over India, for the lepers to lead a normal life, like you and me,
where they can feel that they are somebody,
that they are our brothers and sisters, human beings
created by the same loving hand of God.

FATHER:

Memories are the blessings of God.
Mother Teresa is the salt of the earth mixing with the earth and
enriching it.
But she's an obstinate woman.
She has no organisation. The thing about her is:
"I belong to you whenever you need me."
America, Australia, Africa, England, Ceylon,
wherever she goes, she feels directed.
Like a tree, her branches spread and give shelter.
As Pope Paul VI said, this is her universal mission of love.

ACT TWO

We must not drift away from the humble works, because these are the works nobody will do.

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CHARACTERS in order of appearance:

Mother Teresa.

Sister.

Man, also as Young man; Man in park; Leper;

Unemployed man; Anglo-Indian; Old drunk; Dying man.

Journalist; also as Father.

Children.

Enter MOTHER TERESA:

The rich may be "shut-in" by their own wealth.

In places, we don't have homes for the dying destitutes,
many shut-ins homes are really homes for the dying.

Loneliness is the leprosy of the western world,
like the London bed-sitter writing letters to herself.

We opened a home in New York for AIDS patients,
who find themselves unwanted.

Enter SISTER:

One of the young men (all are young) is dying.

But, strange to say, he cannot die. He struggles with death!

What is it? What is wrong?

Enter (MAN as) YOUNG MAN:

Sister, I cannot die until I ask my father to forgive me.

SISTER:

I found the father and called him.

Then, like a living page from the Gospel,
father embraced son.

Enter (JOURNALIST as) FATHER:

My son! My beloved son!

(MAN as) YOUNG MAN:

Forgive me! Forgive me!

SISTER:

They clung to each other tenderly.

Two hours later the young man died.

MOTHER:

We know now that being unwanted is the greatest disease.

That is the poverty we find around us there.

SISTER:

Alerted by neighbors, the sisters arrived at a locked apartment
giving off a stench. The police broke down the door
to find a woman four-days dead. No-one knew her name.

Residents of the same building know nothing about their neighbors,
except perhaps their floor -- and they know this only because
their paths cross or they get on the same elevator.

They do not concern themselves with them
except, perhaps, when the stench of their cadavers bothers them.

Our contemplative sisters, dressed in white and praying the rosary,
entered a New York park, to shake the hand of a man, who looked

lonely.

(MAN as) MAN IN PARK:

Oh, I'm not ready. I'm not ready.

SISTER:

We are Sisters. Jesus loves you.

(MAN as) MAN IN PARK:

I am not ready. You have come all the way from heaven,
you are angels from heaven to take me. I am not ready.

SISTER:

Someone said the Sisters have not started any big work, in New
York,
that they are doing small things quietly.

MOTHER:

If you help one person, that is alright.

Jesus would have died for one person, for one sinner.

We must not drift away from the humble works,
because these are the works nobody will do.

We are so small we look at things in a small way.

But God, being Almighty, sees everything great.

We can do little for the people, but at least they know that we do love
them

and that we care for them and that we are at their disposal.

In an old folks home, we visited, they had everything
but everybody was looking toward the door.

And I did not see one with a smile on their face.

JOURNALIST:

Mother, you asked to be an air-line hostess.

Some air-ways gave you free tickets.

MOTHER:

Indian rail-ways had already given me a free train pass.

Up till then, I would sleep a few hours,
by swinging myself into the luggage racks.

If the poor are on the moon, we shall go there, too.

JOURNALIST:

Mother bags her air-line sandwiches and goes round the passengers
for their leavings, just like the gospel story of the loaves and fishes.
At the air-port, she's whisked away in a limousine.

MOTHER:

There had to be some advantage in being Mother Teresa...

JOURNALIST:

In Calcutta, nuns, in the blue-bordered white saris, go to chapel to
pray

for a Sister who died of rabies in the leper camp.

She was a doctor but didnt think a puppys bite needed injections.

MOTHER:

We take only seven jabs for indirect contact -- it's not so bad.

One trouble with leper camps is that very sick are mixed with not so
sick.

So, we rented an isolation hut.

JOURNALIST:

A leper on a mattress is crying:

(MAN as) LEPER:

No amount of medicine helps!

JOURNALIST:

Mother puts her hand to the forehead of the mutilated man and helps a Sister give morphine.

MOTHER:

The pain will go away.

(*Aside*): In the early stages, the disease is not so painful, but people at this stage are in terrible pain.

JOURNALIST:

What about all of you who work here? Isn't it dangerous?

MOTHER:

Up to now, thank God, nothing. But we have to be ready.

JOURNALIST:

Those, who can follow, plead for more food and medicine.

MOTHER:

Yes. -- Tomorrow -- I will try.

JOURNALIST:

Crossing herself again and again, surrounded by beggars, the sick and the crippled, she sets off in the ambulance to bring the fallen, by the way-side, to the Home of the Dying.

(MAN as) UNEMPLOYED MAN (*as Teresa stops at a crossing*):

Mother, I want to find work.

MOTHER:

I don't know any going. I told you, I can't help.

(MAN as) UNEMPLOYED MAN:

Please, mother... (*The ambulance moves on.*)

MOTHER:

He has five children. We treat him for TB, which prevents heavy work.

JOURNALIST:

Next crossing, a small boy reaches out. She crosses herself, picking him up. He is for relief rations, at the home of orphans. They are nursed, taught, found foster parents and spouses. There, a crowd of women wont budge, when she shouts in Bengali: "You must form a line for your ration," doing it for them with coaxing and prodding.

Mother knows her Calcutta: Hindus, Muslims and Christians come on different days.

An unsmiling girl stares at her ration card, she cannot read, is from Catholic Relief Services, telling of Food for Peace, free from the People of America.

MOTHER (*kneels and claps*):

Shiggri! shiggri!

Quickly! Quickly! (*for the toddlers to come to her.*)

Say: Good morning. (*Inarticulate noises greet her.*)

Oh, here is a bright fellow with a big grin.

Naughty, naughty, naughty William. (*She picks him up.*)

He smiles the whole time, does nothing else.

JOURNALIST:

She chucks, under the chin, a foundling in one of the cribs. She knows all their names. That dying baby was found in a dust-bin.

MOTHER:

Love that baby while it lives. No child should die in our care without having experienced love.

I dont care what people say about the death rate.

If they die an hour later, we must let them come.
These babies must not die uncared-for and unloved,
because even a tiny baby can feel.

SISTER:

When Mother last told me to nurse them in my arms,
the baby, tiny and frail as it was, pressed against me, before it died.

JOURNALIST:

A mother pleads for the life of her mongoloid baby facing an
operation.
Teresa touches the child's pale cheek.

MOTHER:

God has given you this great gift of life.
If he wants the gift back, give it to him willingly, with love.
(*Aside*): I gave a child to a high-class family.
The child became completely crippled. So, I said:
Give the child back to me and I will give you a healthy one!

JOURNALIST:

And the father said:
"Take my life first, before you take this child!"

Next stop, the house in the slum where she started
her Mission of Charity, followed by yelling children.

Enter CHILDREN:

Hey, Sister, praise be to Jesus!

Exit children.

(MAN as) ANGLO-INDIAN (*A fair man wheezes and cofs*):
We Anglo-Indians, scattered all over this busti, wish to live together.

MOTHER:

Your old nonsense again. Go to the mobile clinic
and ask Sister for cortisone to treat your asthma. Go along.

JOURNALIST:

An old drunk, in a loin-cloth, clings to her legs,
as she takes medicine from the dispensary cupboard.

(MAN as) OLD DRUNK:

Forgive me for drinking, Mother. I can't stop.

MOTHER:

Then I can't forgive you.

JOURNALIST:

She is not stopped a moment from work.
Last stop, the Home of the Dying, near Kali Temple.
The patients haunt the streets when able to get up again from beds,
too low to hurt themselves falling out.
The Sisters quickly move round, to take pulse,
straighten limb to its rest, looking into eyes,
the mens without expression; the womens wild.

MOTHER:

Tho too weak to move, yet they can scream.

JOURNALIST:

A small statue of the Virgin Mary is crowned
with the golden nose rings of Indian women who died here.

MOTHER:

Those who had nothing have given a crown to the Mother of God.

JOURNALIST:

Mother found a dying man, covered in worms, in the gutter

and brought him here:

(MAN as) DYING MAN:

All my life I have lived like an animal in the street.

Now I shall die like an angel, loved and cared for...

Sister, I'm going home to God.

ACT THREE

If people only had more love for each other, our life would be better.

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CHARACTERS in order of appearance. Mother Teresa. Journalist.

Enter MOTHER:

The old "His Grace" was right. People hear so much about bad things.

I carry out his advice to tell The Good News.

I've been to so many meetings.

There were important and intelligent speeches.

I said simple things, even stupid things a child would say.

But people are longing for those things.

Enter JOURNALIST:

Say, Mother, please tell us something we will remember.

MOTHER:

Smile at each other, make time for each other in your family.

Smile at each other.

JOURNALIST:

Are you married?

MOTHER:

Yes, and sometimes I find it hard to smile at Jesus

because he can be demanding.

JOURNALIST:

Would you not have wanted children of your own?

MOTHER:

Naturally, naturally, that is the sacrifice.

JOURNALIST:

And you, Mother Teresa, how do you feel about yourself?

MOTHER:

By blood and origin, I am an Albanian. My citizenship is Indian.
I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the whole world.
As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus.

JOURNALIST:

What is your purpose in picking up dying people?

MOTHER:

Each one is the homeless Christ, no?

JOURNALIST:

Mother Teresa, you always talk of loving people in Jesus.
What if I, for example, felt that isn't enough.
Suppose I want to be loved for my own sake?
What would you say to that?

MOTHER (*smiles*):

Jesus comes in so many forms, so many disguises,
that there is no difficulty in loving each person as a person.

JOURNALIST:

Why did you grant this interview? Did you want people to give money?

Did you want greater support for your work?

MOTHER:

I don't make appeals for the work. The only support is providence.

JOURNALIST:

Then why did you agree to this interview?

MOTHER:

I agreed because interviewing is your job, and I wanted to cooperate.

JOURNALIST:

Are you ever angry? Are you ever frustrated?

MOTHER:

Yes, I get angry -- when I see things wasted that people need, things that could save them from dying.

Frustrated? No, never.

JOURNALIST:

There is a photo of you holding a Bengali child, showing grief, possibly anger.

MOTHER:

Yes, I was angry. The child was ill and they left him behind.

I picked him up and we took him to our children's home.

We did everything, but he died in two weeks.

JOURNALIST:

What makes you feel sad?

MOTHER:

Things like this. A woman gave me a sick baby, to do our best.

The child died in my arms. I saw that woman's face as she stood there,

and I felt the way she did.

JOURNALIST:

Is not opposition to contraception and abortion
only creating more misery in an over-crowded world?

MOTHER:

Abortion is nothing but fear of the child --
fear to have to feed one more child, to have to educate one more
child,
to have to love one more child. Therefore the child must die.
Killing is killing even if the child is not yet born.
To authorize abortion sows hatred in a country.
If a mother can kill her child, why are we not to kill others,
those who get in our way? Abortion is a double murder
that kills the child and kills the conscience of the mother
and the conscience of the society that permits it.

If I had the power, I would open a jail and would put every doctor,
who performs abortions, in jail for killing a child -- the gift of God.

JOURNALIST:

A Court order allowed a mongoloid child to be left to die.

MOTHER:

Court order or no court order, I would have snatched up that baby
and run to where he could be saved.
I wouldnt care if the police came after me.
I wouldnt give up that baby.

JOURNALIST:

Is killing ever justified, for example, in the case of war?

MOTHER: *Silence, shaking her head, no.*

JOURNALIST:

Look, Mother, the Church teaches that war can be justified.

MOTHER:

I cannot believe it.

JOURNALIST:

Catholics have to accept that doctrine of the Church.

MOTHER:

Then, am I not a Catholic?

JOURNALIST:

Is Christ partial to the poor, Mother Teresa?

MOTHER:

Christ is not partial. He is hungry for our love.

To give us the chance to put our love into action,

he makes Himself the poor one, the hungry one, the naked one.

God wants us to love one another, as He loves each one of us.

So, when we die and go home, he can say:

"I was hungry, you gave me to eat. I was naked, you clothed me.

I was homeless, you took me in. You did all this to me."

JOURNALIST:

Do you find it easy to carry out your work among the poor?

MOTHER:

Of course, it would not be easy without an intense life of prayer and a spirit of sacrifice. It wouldn't be easy if we didn't see that Christ continues to suffer the sorrows of his passion, in the poor.

To be able to serve, the Sisters and the Brothers vow chastity
(for the undivided love of Christ),
poverty (to be free to love Christ),

and obedience (to Christ, so he can use us).
Jesus put his love for us into action by dying on the cross
and making himself the Bread of Life.

At times we would be happy if the poor could live peacefully.
It is so hard for those deprived of basic needs
to live in harmony and support their neighbours,
and not see them as dangerous competitors,
capable of making their misery worse!
We can only offer our testimony of love,
seeing Christ himself in each one of them,
no matter how repugnant they seem to us.

JOURNALIST:

What is the hardest part of your work?

MOTHER:

This. If nothing else, publicity has purified me and sacrificed me
and made me really ready to go to heaven.
For each publicity foto, I ask God to free a soul from purgatory.

JOURNALIST:

What are your views on new books and movements?

MOTHER:

I can't remember all those things. My mind is on one of two things,
God and the Society. I have no imagination.
I cannot imagine God the Father -- so great. All I see is Jesus.

JOURNALIST:

Do you feel that the Church, the churches, spend too much on
luxuries,
when so many people are in want?

MOTHER:

We are all the Church. We must not judge others but ourselves.
We must remember that we will be judged on what we have done
for the hungry Jesus, the homeless Jesus.

In America, you can be suffocated by possessions.
Caring for them takes time, leaving no time for each other or for the
poor.
You must give freely to the poor what the rich get for their money.

JOURNALIST:

How can a merciful God allow such suffering, children dying of
hunger,
people killed in earthquakes? What can you say to that?

MOTHER (*softly and meditatively*):

All that suffering -- where would the world be without it?
It is innocent suffering, like the suffering of Jesus for us.
All the innocent suffering is joined to His
in the redemption. It is co-redemption.
That helps to save the world from worse things.

JOURNALIST:

You were awarded the Discovery Medal. Have you made any
discoveries?

MOTHER:

I am too small to discover anything -- Yes, I suppose it is a discovery
for some that the poorest of the poor, the rejected,
the throwaways among us -- they are Jesus in His disguise.

JOURNALIST:

What does it feel like to be a living saint?

MOTHER:

I'm happy you see Jesus in me, because I see Jesus in you.
Holiness is not just for a few. It is the simple duty of us all.
Holiness is for everyone, including you, sir.
I need to go to confession like anyone else
and I make mistakes, even in the placement of Sisters.
I can make mistakes but God does not make mistakes.

JOURNALIST:

How does it feel to have won the recognition and admiration of the world?

MOTHER:

All of us are but His instruments, who do our little bit and pass by.

JOURNALIST:

You have been called the most powerful woman in the world?

MOTHER:

I wish it were true. I would use my power to banish war.

JOURNALIST:

Have you any advice to politicians?

MOTHER:

I don't give advice to professionals...I would only offer concern
that politicians may not spend much time on their knees.
If politicians prayed a little more, they would surely recognise
the pain and injustice within their own systems.

JOURNALIST:

Mother Teresa, you love people, others regard as human debris.
What is your secret?

MOTHER:

My secret is quite simple. I pray.

The call of God to be a Missionary of Charity is the hidden treasure.

I have sold all to purchase it. You remember in the Gospel

what the man did when he found the hidden treasure --

he hid it. That is what I want to do for God.

We are not social workers but contemplatives in the world.

We are Sisters in the world, not of the world,
committed to a life of action based on prayer.

Jesus does not say "hold fast to the world"

but "love one another as I have loved you."

You cannot love as he did without prayer.

Whatever religion is yours, pray together.

Brothers and sisters, in faith, need to meet God in prayer.

I asked a rich man, in Yemen, a wholly Muslim country, to provide a
Masjid.

A Sister who does not pray cannot remain with us --

she might as well go. Thru prayer you will believe

and thru belief you will love -- thru love you will serve.

The Sisters pray their way, even on the trams.

They tell me the times for journeys by the number of rosaries they
can say.

In India, there is a great respect for holiness,
even among the rascals. The Sisters are all young.

They walk so fast, people call them the "running nuns."

Many Bengalis call them the preachers of love, who do not preach in
words.

JOURNALIST:

Mother Teresa, do you have any profesies for the future?

MOTHER:

Who am I to profesy? I am nobody. I know only one thing.
If people only had more love for each other, our life would be better.
If more people realised that Jesus was in their neighbor,
and they would help, things would be much better.
Every work of love brings a person face to face with God.

We must love one another. That is all Jesus came to tell us.
"Love me as I have loved you."

ACT FOUR

People of all faiths say: We want to help.

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CHARACTERS in order of appearance.

Co-worker, Eileen Egan.

Mother Teresa.

(Journalist as) Walk-on parts: Poor man; Mothers father; Missionary priests;

Man in Brazil; Old man; Man needing medicine; Beggar.

Brother (of the Mission of Charity); also as Nehru; Mothers brother, Lazar;

Castro; Newly wed; Pope John Paul II.

Sister; also as Woman with baby; Mothers Mother; Afflicted woman. Boy.

First child.

Second child.

Enter CO-WORKER, EILEEN EEGAN:

On my first visit for Catholic Relief Services, Mother sensed I was nervous

and stopped me outside the rest-house.

Enter MOTHER TERESA:

I dont want you to go to the Home for the Dying feeling sad.

Pray and ask God to lift your heart because, whatever you see there, I want you to transmit joy.

CO-WORKER:

I became one of the Mission Co-Workers
for the brotherhood of man under the fathership of God.
Its members are of all faiths and none.
"Co-workers" was Gandhi name for his helpers.
They found their ideal of service in Krishna:
"The man who casts off all desires, and walks without desire,
with no thought of a mine and an I, comes into peace."

In a Mother and Child clinic opened in Shishu Bhavan,
Tara, meaning Star, told how proud she was of her new sari.

MOTHER:

Taras mother has a cancer and she is suffering.
Tara fought with her and struck her.
I asked the child to come to me. I told her:
"In forty two years, I have never touched anyone
but I shall do to you what you did to your mother."
She was surprised. She's been an angel ever since.

CO-WORKER (*Aside*):

No-one, not even a charging bull, doubted Mothers strength of
character.
Arms extended, she put herself between her beloved lepers and the
bull,
who ground to a halt.
Every-one said that the bull knew when he had met his match.

MOTHER:

It is a Calcutta joke that Mother Teresa is always talking about family
planning
and abortion but every day she has more children.
We found aborted babies, thrown away in a bucket, and saved

some.

Indian adoption is a near miracle because of caste barriers.

Enter (JOURNALIST as) POOR MAN:

You people who have evolved chastity,
you are the best people to teach us family planning
because it is nothing more than self-control out of love for each
other.

MOTHER:

We teach the temperature method, which is very beautiful
and simple and our poor people understand.

Enter (SISTER as) WOMAN WITH BABY:

Mother, about your "Holy Family Planning," I didnt want another
baby.

MOTHER:

Did you not take a string of colored beads to count your safe
periods?

(SISTER as) WOMAN WITH BABY:

Yes, Mother, and hung it round the neck of Kali, and I am still
pregnant.

CO-WORKER:

Well, almost all her people understand.
The rhythm method of birth control, as a natural method,
interested birth control agencies world-wide,
after scientific proof of its accuracy.

MOTHER:

Our people always want to thank the Sisters
with a cup of tea, or maybe the last thing they have to eat.

Or they buy a sweet to be ready for the Sisters.
Then, invitations came from the other side.
Better-off families would invite the Sisters for tea.
The simple answer is that the Sisters can accept nothing --
from the richest or the poorest. That way nobody feels hurt.
Each sister carries a bottle of water to drink in the heat.

CO-WORKER (*Aside*):

Mother refused a refreshment at eleven at night after going without,
all day.

With difficulty, she was persuaded to have a drink with lemon in it.

The Sisters were given an annual treat of ice-cream.

Mother came in late and tired-out.

MOTHER:

I'll have some of that ice-cream.

CO-WORKER:

It was the only time I ever heard her express a desire of her own.

In 1960, after ten years probation in Calcutta,
the mission opened a new childrens home, in Delhi,
attended by the Prime Minister.

Mr Nehru got-up out of his sick-bed to be there.

MOTHER:

Should I tell you about the work of the Congregation?

Enter (BROTHER as) NEHRU:

No Mother, you need not tell me about your work;

I know about it. That is why I have come.

CO-WORKER:

Mother made an unpopular remark about Indias glamor city.

MOTHER:

The slums of Bombay are worse than the slums of Calcutta.

CO-WORKER:

In 1960, Teresa first left India.

She was invited by the national council of Catholic women.

Las Vegas city fathers gave their convention free use of a hall.

The nun in sari and sandals was puzzled by air passengers
merriment

at her destination.

(*To Teresa*): Well, what do you think of Las Vegas?

MOTHER: (*looking round and smiling*):

Dewali.

CO-WORKER:

Dewali: the Hindu festival of lights!

No Indian would think of holding it all year round.

Mother took one souvenir.

In the Nevada desert, meditating on her talk,
she picked up cactus spines to twine into a crown of thorns.

Once home, she will place it on the crucified Christ
hanging behind the altar in the novitiate chapel.

On the prairies of Illinois, she stopped at twenty grain bins,
part of the American "Food for Peace" program.

MOTHER:

May God bless you for your help to our poor mothers,
our children, our sick and our dying, our lepers.

I am glad I came here to see this and to meet the good people.

CO-WORKER:

Teresa saw herself on Malcolm Muggeridge book *Something
Beautiful for God*.

MOTHER:

There she is.

CO-WORKER:

Would *she* be ready to leave for the visit with Cardinal Cooke?

Her is ready to go.

Picking up the book Mother autographed for me, I read:

One for her from -- She -- God love you and keep you always
in His own Heart. God bless you. -- M. Teresa M.C.

Malcolms television interview was followed by donations
addressed to "the nun in the white and blue sari."

MOTHER:

I didn't know how to refuse, without giving offence, Cardinal Cooke
offer five hundred dollars a month for each Sister working in Harlem.
I could only say: Do you think, Your Eminence,
that God is going to become bankrupt in New York?...

CO-WORKER:

The German charity Caritas gave generously to Mothers poor,
in gratitude for aid, especially from American Catholics.

We walked to the archbishop of Freiburg.

Admiring the preserved medieval drain, I slipped in on my back.

Mother pulled me up.

I tell her: "Now that you have picked me up out of the gutter,
you are responsible for me."

(They laugh.)

When the archbishop asked us to sit down, I hesitated.

Mother motioned me into a green velvet chair.

I respectfully left walking backwards, leaving chair in sorry state.

In Italy, her brother Lazar Bojaxhiu witnessed four young girls received into the Mission.

(BROTHER as) MOTHERS BROTHER, LAZAR:

Those young girls are so full of happiness as they give their lives away. You see how they live here. I did not know you before. It is now that I come to know you.

MOTHER (*laughs*):

You are always a boy.

(BROTHER as) MOTHERS BROTHER:

When I read about my sister, I ask myself, is it my sister saying these things? How do you know what you will say at these meetings?

MOTHER:

It will come to me at the time.

(BROTHER as) MOTHERS BROTHER:

What faith! What confidence! Frankly I had little of religion after I left home...

CO-WORKER:

Teresa could do so much for others, yet the Albanian government stopped her from seeing her mother and sister.

Religious worship received the death penalty. Afterwards, Teresa was allowed to re-open six churches and a mosque.

She returned to her home town of Skopje to found a mission.

MOTHER:

You gave the world one missionary. I now return four.

Our father Nikolle never closed his heart nor the doors of his home to someone he knew needed food, shelter, or care.

(JOURNALIST as) MOTHERS FATHER:

Treat that elderly woman always with love.

All the more reason in that she is a distant relative of ours.

But when they are not our relatives, we should always share our bread

with those who have none. Never put in your mouth anything which you would not be ready to share with someone hungry.

MOTHER:

Our mother was a holy woman. She did all she could so that we would grow loving each other and Jesus.

But above all else, she instilled in us the love of God.

(SISTER as) MOTHERS MOTHER:

To prepare for first Communion, you must avoid every lie.

Should you tell a lie, your tongues will turn black as coal.

MOTHER:

One day, when I let a lie escape, I ran to the mirror.

It could be imagination but I'm convinced that my tongue looked black.

Right away, I went to set things straight with her.

My letters told her that I was happy teaching at St Marys High School.

(SISTER as) MOTHERS MOTHER:

My dear daughter, never forget that the only reason, for your going forth

to a country so far away, was the poor.

MOTHER:

Our first mission, allowed outside India, was in Venezuela.

Besides works of mercy, the Sisters preach.

They lead the prayers; they give out Communion.

(Smiling) All they cannot do is to celebrate the mass.

CO-WORKER:

What about confessions? They cannot hear confessions yet, can they?

MOTHER:

Oh, yes, they hear confessions all the time. *(Laughing out loud)*

They just cannot give absolution.

BROTHER:

In 1963, Mother Teresa was button-holing priests to start a Brothers Mission of Charity.

She finally kidnapped me from the Jesuits, as Brother Andrew.

Meant for some priest long moved on, I received the Catholic Worker newspaper, telling of voluntary service to the poor, a non-violent lay mission depending on providence, founded by Dorothy Day. She met Mother Teresa.

MOTHER:

Would you be willing to wear our crucifix, Dorothy?

(SISTER as) DOROTHY:

I will wear it as you do.

MOTHER:

You are now a spiritual Missionary of Charity. You are one of us.

BROTHER:

The Brothers in Charity, dressed like the poor, wear a small cross, as the Sisters do, taking up their cross to follow Christ.

In a Brazil city slum, foreign missionary priests shunned the Brothers:

(JOURNALIST as) MISSIONARY PRIESTS:

Move on. We don't want you. All you do is give the people a wash and something to eat -- and nothing changes for the poor.

BROTHER:

The Brothers conducted a shelter for homeless and troubled boys wanted by no-one -- except perhaps the police.

A man, of importance in Brazil, wrote to Mother:

(JOURNALIST as) MAN IN BRAZIL:

I gave-up a high position and wanted only to commit suicide.

I lost my faith in God and man.

One day, passing a shop window, my eyes fell on a televised scene of Nirmal Hriday, where Sisters tend the sick and dying.

For the first time in many years, I knelt and prayed.

Now I have decided to turn back to God and have faith in humanity, because I saw that God still loves the world.

MOTHER:

One of our Brothers came in terrible distress.

He had some difficulty with his Superior.

BROTHER:

Mother, my vocation is to work with lepers.

My calling is with the lepers.

MOTHER (*smiling*):

Brother your vocation is not to work for the lepers,
your vocation is to belong to Jesus.

He understood and it changed him completely.

A simple task began the work in Melbourne:

Please allow me to clean your place, wash your clothes, and make
your bed.

(JOURNALIST as) OLD MAN:

Don't bother. I'm all right.

MOTHER:

You'll feel better if you allow me to clean everything up a bit.

(JOURNALIST as) OLD MAN:

Well, you can if you want.

MOTHER: Do you light the lamp in the evening?

(JOURNALIST as) OLD MAN:

For whom? For years and years, nobody has come to see me.

MOTHER:

Would you light the lamp if my Sisters came to visit you?

(JOURNALIST as) OLD MAN:

Yes, I will light it, if I hear the sound of a human voice.

CO-WORKER:

Mother returned to Melbourne to be greeted as his friend.

(JOURNALIST as) OLD MAN:

The light you have lit in my life is still burning.

CO-WORKER:

In Tanzania, one was not supposed to speak of "the poor,"
so Mother just spoke of looking after "Our People."
She met Fidel Castro to open a home
for the poorest of the poor in Havana.

(BROTHER as) CASTRO:

That is impossible! We have no poor here.

MOTHER:

Very well, but there must be sick, dying, and disabled people.

(BROTHER as) CASTRO:

Certainly.

MOTHER:

Well then, we would like to take care of them.

In 1973, the Indian Sisters were not wanted in Belfast.

Failure is nothing but the kiss of Jesus.

Leaving Belfast was a sacrifice - but fruitful -

for our Sisters went to Ethiopia to feed the hungry Christ.

I once told a patient that: Pain and suffering are the kiss of Jesus.

They said: Then tell Jesus to stop kissing me!

CO-WORKER:

In Beruit, the Sisters had their baptism of fire,
they called "heavy Dewali."

Making a trunk call to Mother, they asked if they should stay.

MOTHER:

I listened to them and we talked it over.

They were willing to stay there.

Before hanging up, I said: Call me up when you are dead.
They laughed and went back to praying.

CO-WORKER:

Back home, Calcutta Co-Workers decided on a childrens Christmas party:

"How many should we invite and cater for?"

MOTHER:

What about ten thousand? (*Stunned silence.*) ...

If you can provide the food, the Sisters can provide the children.

(JOURNALIST as) MAN NEEDING MEDICINE:

My only child is dying!

The doctors prescription can be got only in England.

MOTHER: The government permits us to store life-saving medicines.

Many people make house to house collections.

While we were talking, a man came in with a basket --
right on top was the medicine needed.

It was just in the right place at the right time:

There are millions of children in the world,
and God is concerned with that little child in the slums of Calcutta.
He would do the same for you and for me.

CO-WORKER:

Good fortune blessed us.

The army gave food to the Mission during the Calcutta floods.

The soldiers snapped to attention at Mothers orders.

MOTHER:

We worked day and night cooking for five thousand.

One day, something told me to turn off the road.

A village was being swept away.

We got boats for the dwellers.
We learned that in two hours, they would have drowned.

I said, to the bishop:
I will ask our novices to pray for the pouring rain to stop.
The novices are earnest. They pray with energy.
It will be a strong expression -- from 178 of them --
in our church, before the Blessed Sacrament.

When I looked out, the rain had stopped
and there was a patch of clear sky above us --
yes, I believe in miracles.

SISTER:
Mother, there is no food. We will have to tell the people
we have nothing today and tomorrow.

MOTHER:
I had nothing to say
but the government closed the schools.
All the bread was sent to us and our children
and our seven thousand ate bread for two days.
They had never eaten so much bread in their lives!
Nobody in all Calcutta knew why the schools closed
but I knew. I knew the delicate thoughtfulness of God.

A Sister telephoned from Agra, desperate for a childrens home
that would cost fifty thousand rupees.
We do not have the money: it is impossible.
The fone rang again. This time it's from a news-paper.
I've been given the Magsaysay Award from the Philippines.
How much is it?
About fifty thousand rupees?
God must want a childrens home in Agra.

SISTER:

A cyclone hits a small group of islands every year.
One woman was thrown into the River Meghna.
Getting hold of a python, the good python pulled her to another island
and left her safe on dry land. A fisherman rescued her three days later.
Even crocodiles saved a few people.

MOTHER:

How wonderful are the ways of God!
Even the fighting and flooding in Bangladesh was a blessing in disguise
for bringing out the best in the Indian people,
going without, to help the refugees.
Children, too, brought an onion or a spoonful of rice.
Four thousand fed daily at Shishu Bhavan or they would not eat.
They offered to go a day without food so the refugees might eat.

The Indian government permitted religious women
from fifteen congregations all over the world.
Their Sisters all wanted to share a life of poverty and prayer
with the Missionaries of Charity.
After six months, each Sister expressed her gratitude.

SISTER:

I have received much more than I have given
and I will never be the same person.

MOTHER:

We saw terrible sufferings and need in Bangladesh.
And there is such bitterness and hatred.
Perhaps if they believed they were cared for,
and felt loved, they could find it in their hearts to forgive,

which is perhaps their greatest need.
I think only this can bring peace.

Once, Calcutta had hardly any sugar for our abandoned children.
A four year old Hindu boy heard this.

Enter BOY:

I shall eat no sugar for three days -- I want to give mine to Mother Teresa.

MOTHER:

How much sugar can a child of four eat? A small cup full.

BOY:

I have gone without sugar for three days. This is for your children.
Exit boy.

MOTHER:

A child got a piece of bread from a Sister.
I saw that child eating slowly, crumb by crumb:
I know you are hungry. Why don't you eat the bread up?

Enter FIRST CHILD:

I want it to last longer.
I am afraid, when the bread is finished, I will be hungry again.
Exit first child.

MOTHER:

The child next to him was not even eating.
I thought that he had finished his bread.

Enter SECOND CHILD:

I'm very hungry, but my father is sick
and I think he would love to have this piece of bread.
Exit second child.

MOTHER:

The poor are a great people!

They aren't asking us to feel sorry for them.

They deserve our love!

When our sisters found a starving family,

the woman gave half our rice to another starving family.

One family was Buddhist, the other was Muslim.

I was not surprised she shared. I was surprised she knew.

We have come a long way.

The people of Calcutta have come to know and love the poor.

No-one is left to die on the road...

I have seen children pick up and take old people from the street...

People of all faiths say: We want to help.

They are willing to touch the poor, no?

That is the beauty of the work.

I tended a dying woman from the streets.

When I put her in bed, she took hold of my hand.

With a beautiful smile, she said only "Thankyou" before she died.

She gave me much more than I had given her.

She gave me her grateful love.

I examined my conscience and thought I would have tried

to draw a little attention to myself, by complaining of my woes.

But she had courage and she had love to give to me,

instead of keeping it for herself, instead of being focused on herself.

These are admirable things!

(BROTHER as) NEWLY-WED:

We got married two days ago. We decided not to have a wedding feast

and not buy wedding clothes. We saved for you to feed the people.

MOTHER:

Why did you do that, when going without wedding clothes and a feast
is a scandal in a rich Hindu family?

(BROTHER as) NEWLY-WED:

Mother, we love each other so much that we want to obtain
a special blessing from God by making a sacrifice.
We want to give each other this special gift.

MOTHER:

Isn't that beautiful? Things like that happen every day.
Now we feed more than nine thousand in Shishu Bhavan every day.
All those houses, 257 I think, a hundred and twenty in India.
Look what God is doing with nothing.
People must believe that it is all His, all His.
We must allow God to use us.
I am more convinced of the work being His
than I am convinced I am really alive.

CO-WORKER:

After Mothers first school, institutes followed by the thousand,
not forgetting the new Vatican house, next to the Audience Hall,
where Pope John Paul II would help with the serving.
He presented her with the key before she could ask again.

In 1975, the Silver jubilee of the Mission of Charity
was celebrated right across religious lines:

There were not just the Christian churches --
Armenian, Protestant, Methodist, Assembly of God, and Mar Thoma.
Also, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, Parsis and Muslims joined in.

MOTHER:

When we won the Nobel prize, the media descended like vultures. --

But even vultures can be beautiful.

Quickly, people are coming to realise that sharing, sharing
and the works of love are really works of peace.

(JOURNALIST as) BEGGAR (*at the door, shouts*):

Mother Teresa! Mother Teresa!

CO-WORKER:

A beggar holds out his days bowl of coins, amounting to a rupee or
two,
kissing her hand when she decides to take it.

MOTHER:

He gave everything he had. He probably won't eat tonight.
I value this gift much more than I value the Nobel prize
and all the other awards that I have received.

We need to learn from the beautiful that is in everything --

A poor person is able to pass days without eating.

Would we have this capacity?

They are a people full of life, who, incredible as it seems, smile,
have hopes, are able to lead a purer life, that is nearer to God.

The beauty is not in poverty but in the courage
that they show by still smiling and having hope.

(SISTER as) AFFLICTED WOMAN:

What can afflicted people such as me, with cerebral palsy, do?

MOTHER:

You can do the most. You live with Jesus on the cross every day.
You pray the work with us and help give us strength.

(SISTER as) AFFLICTED WOMAN:

We can never obtain complete happiness on earth,

for happiness is found only in heaven.
And we cannot obtain it if we give in to our despair.
We are fortunate to have a share in Christ's cross.

MOTHER:

How happy I am to have all you sick and suffering co-workers.
Often when the work is hard, I think of you -- and tell God --
look at my suffering children, and for their love, bless this work.
And it works at once. So, you see, you are our treasure house --
the power-house of the Missionaries of Charity.
You are the faithful branch sharing in the passion of Christ.
Each Sister and Brother, you are twinned with, sees you as a second
self.
May the Lord keep you in his heart, the only place we can be
together.

My Suffering Co-worker went thru so many operations, I begged:
Please dear Lord, don't shower your gifts
quite so quickly upon her!

As well as you Co-workers and Suffering Co-workers of Charity,
I am asking permission of the Holy Father to found a new
congregation
of priests, the Missionary Fathers of Charity.
They are to be a spiritual link to our Mission of Brothers and Sisters,
and the Brothers and Sisters Contemplative...
I don't think I will start anything more.

(BROTHER as) POPE JOHN PAUL II:

Mother, let me be the first priest to join your congregation.

MOTHER:

Holy Father, do you remember my request for your special
dispensation,

that I might tell all the Cardinals and Bishops that you have told me
I must not attend their invitations?

(BROTHER as) POPE:
I'll think about it.

MOTHER:
I present Sister Nirmala as the new Superior General
of the Missionaries of Charity.
I am completely free now.

(BROTHER as) POPE:
You still remain the foundress.

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After-word

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I didn't preface this play, because I thought readers would want to get straight into it. However, I should mention that the work first appeared on a since defunct website, from which, the Mother Teresa play is little changed. It later appeared, as the opening work, in my book: Radical!

The play has now been liberated as this stand-alone book, so that people better may know about it. Also, this version is more convenient for people who might want to perform the play, or just read it. From the start, I have asked that my author royalties be donated to the Mother Teresa of Calcutta Mission of Charity.

I have written a good many works, which may be found on my Smashwords profile page:

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/democracyscience>

Never the less, I had a special reason for writing about Mother Teresa, because the principal of my primary school was just such a devotee. Her principal justification for being there, as she did not teach, was to administer impartial justice on our childish misdemeanors, treating us all with absolute equality.

When I got older, and, no doubt, more experienced of the ways of the world, with its favoritism and inequality, I appreciated what she had tried to do for us.

So, I had no problem, in my play, with characterising the nun, since made a saint. Her religious values were as real and convincing to me, as the secular values with which we are daily saturated.

[2020 post-script] Finally, I came across a diary note, dating from the early 2000s, about Nikki, the dedicatee of this play. Nikki suffered from an inherited degenerative disease, spinal muscular dystrophy. When she was young, it had not taken so full a hold. She once told me of how, as a child, treatment included hanging her up to stretch and straighten her. I think they set her, like that, in plaster! Not a fun experience. There was no end to the medical treatment (and mistreatment) to which she was subjected. A crucifix, on the wall, beside her, I still think was a most fitting companion for all her sufferings.

Nikki went into a coma, that left her with a complete memory wipe. She loved Dickens but she had lost all of it. Later, she down-loaded his complete works, from the internet. Curiously, one memory remained. Nikki met Mother Teresa. Nikki believed she had been picked, because she wrote the childrens play, which this missionary attended. Nikki was fifteen to sixteen, at the time.

Nikki believed it was a genuine memory, that escaped the memory wipe of the coma, because no-one else was there, who could have told her about it. Mother Teresa was so neat in her white and blue sari. Mother was smaller even than herself, with hands smaller than Nikkis. Teresa didn't say more than was called for. She was not at all the sort of person you would expect. She was not a commanding, getting things done sort.

The note ends with a new paragraph, saying no more than the phrase "Gold ring." I take this to be a missionary wedding ring of devotion to Jesus, in his good works.

Richard Lung.

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